

How Miraculous Christmas Truly Is
Pastor Joseph Clark
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Luke 1:26-38

New International Version

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Matthew 1:18-25

New International Version

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[b] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[c] because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^[d] (which means “God with us”).

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Luke 2:1-20

New International Version

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the

baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Matthew 2:1-12

New International Version

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^[a] from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ “‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’^[b]”

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Message

6 months after Elizabeth’s (Mary’s cousin’s) miraculous pregnancy with the babe who we will come to know as John the Baptist, Mary is visited by the Angel Gabriel

who tells her that she is to become chosen for the prophesied virgin birth of the one and only messiah.

She is unnerved for several reasons. For one, she is only roughly 13 years of age. However, in those days, the average lifespan of a man was roughly 35 years. 13-year-old girls were young women and already knew how to fulfil the responsibilities of wife and mother. She is a virgin as she has yet to be married to Joseph to whom she has been pledged for marriage. What does this mean? It means based on Hebrew tradition that a marriage contract has been drawn up and negotiated between the two families and Joseph is most likely preparing rooms in his father's house to accommodate Joseph's wife and potential children. It means that they do not see one another for a period as lengthy as one year, and that Joseph will send gifts periodically to Mary. Engagement gifts to remind her that he is pledged to her. A virgin birth means that she will have much explaining to do to Joseph, both of their households, and the community, which at that time was a religious community governed by two authorities. The Roman civil authority, and the Hebrew church law. By today's standards the Hebrew community would have been considered a cult. For this 13-year-old young lady, she faced the possibility of losing her fiancé, public disgrace, and possible stoning to death by her fellowship. But Mary, who no doubt is educated on the prophecies, is overjoyed, she tells Gabriel that she is up to the task and honoured to be selected. And she even sings a song to the Lord. What a beautiful reassurance in Gabriel's statement to her that "No word from God will ever fail." A reminder to us of how important it is to spend time daily in The Word of God. To know it. And to live it. For it informs us of both the rewards and repercussions of our choices. No word from God will ever fail.

When Mary reveals to Joseph that she is pregnant, he understandably does not believe her story of a virgin birth and immaculate conception. Who would? But rather than endanger her to the disgrace and possible punishments he decides to quietly divorce her. For it would not be just Mary who faces disgrace, but her whole family. And Joseph wishes to spare all of them that humiliation and harm their standing in the community. Luke adds an important reference as do Matthew Mark, and John in their Gospels. Pointing out the specific prophecies that are fulfilled throughout those great writings. "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^[d] (which means "God with us")." God with us!

Jesus. God the Son. He did not come to us as God imitating a man. He came to us as God taking the form of a man. He became a man fully committed to the sufferings that a man suffers. Mourning and crying, bleeding, pain, needing his feet to be washed. Needing food to live. Etc.

As did Mary, Joseph humbly takes on the Angel's command and he takes Mary as his wife. And he obviously takes very seriously the glory of God in his wife's womb as he restrains from consummating the marriage until after the babe is born. This tells us that there is no doubt in his mind, that she carries the Messiah.

We do not hear much about Joseph. He does not utter a word which is quoted in the Bible. We know that he is visited by an Angel in his dreams five times. We know from the Bible that he and Mary parented five sons, Jesus, James, Joses, Simon, and Jude, as well as two daughters who are referenced but not named. We know that Jesus is the oldest as Mary was a virgin when she had him and if Joseph had had children for a previous marriage they would have travelled with them to Bethlehem for the census in a caravan. The other reason that we know that Jesus was the oldest is that he read from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue which would have been an honoured bestow upon the oldest child, and we know at the wedding at Cana, that when they run out of wine, Mary does not bring the problem to Joseph, a good indicator that he was not there, nor did she bring the problem to any of Jesus brothers, she brought it to Jesus. It would have been the custom that once his father died, the oldest would take on many of the roles and responsibilities of the father to solve problems and care for the family as they become the highest male in the family hierarchy. Therefore, Mary brings the problem of the wine to Christ. We know that Joseph was alive when Jesus was 12 years of age, but there is no mention of him beyond that. An indicator that he died somewhere between when Jesus was 12 years of age and 28 to 30 years of age, when he began his 3-year ministry.

God chooses the Shepherds to send his angels to announce Christ's birth. Shepherding was a humble job. A poor man's job. Watching other people's flocks, to protect them from predators and bandits. The last shall be first and the first shall be last, and the Shepherds are given this honour. Throughout Christ's ministry he references shepherds and flocks, "I am the Good Shepherd, leave the 99 to find the one missing sheep. It is also worth noting that God chose the patriarchs

Abraham and Jacob, the twelve tribes, the prophet Moses, King David, and the Old Testament prophet Amos, who were shepherds. And why not first alert the Shepherds. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World.

The Magi, which literally means wise men, noble pilgrims from the east which would have been a reference to most likely Persia, India, and Arabia. They come seeking the king of Jews, therefore they as noblemen go to the earthly residing king of the Jews who is Herod. Incidentally, Herod's tomb was discovered by archeologist in 2007 roughly 12 kilometres south of Jerusalem. He was known as Herod the great for constructing the second temple at Jerusalem. However, he was a ruthless man who dies a miserable death. Although he lived to an unusually old age of 69, he dies from kidney disease, urinary tract infection, and gangrene in his reproductive body parts. He had in his lifetime 10 wives that we know of and 14 children which we know of. He was a cruel and treacherous ruler. He felt that his throne was threatened by Jesus being born King of the Jews, that he had all the boys two years and younger born in Bethlehem slaughtered and then slaughtered his own son. Always fearful that someone would rise and overthrow his kingdom, he systematically killed off anyone he regarded as a threat. He murdered Joseph, the husband of his sister, Salome, and then Mariamne's grandfather. Salome reported that Mariamne and her mother were plotting against him. Although he dearly loved Mariamne, he had her and her mother executed. He murdered two of his sons by Mariamne, Alexander and Aristobulus. Notice that he speaks to the Magi in private asking them to return with news of the location of Jesus, which they never do. For surely God would not let that happen. The Magi see Jesus birth as glorious, worthy of the travel and an experience of a lifetime. The Bible makes no mention of how many Magi visited. Tradition frames it as three, but there is no Biblical reason to think it was three. It could have been a dozen. It could have been five. They give the family gifts worthy of a king. The walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have been roughly 80 miles for Joseph and Mary.

Someone once said to me that as a minister of Jesus Christ by the Grace of God, that Christmas must be my Superbowl Sunday. I told them that no, that is incorrect, that would be Easter Sunday, however Christmas for me personally is a second. We must not get caught up on the exact date of Christ's birth or the pagan holidays that resulted on our celebrating it on December 25th. For if we chastised every pagan based tradition that influences what we do, dress, and say, both religious and

secular, we would not be able to drive from here to the grocery store and back without pointing out several breeches. The fact is that we commemorate the birth of Christ on this day.

All aspects of the story of Jesus birth, are based on obedience and faith centered around the child who was the savior, the messiah, the son of God. God the son.

We are saved when we choose to receive him in our hearts as Lord and Savior in accordance with the Gospels. Merry Christmas and May the Lord be with you and yours evermore.